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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 18th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 8 July 1997 at 10 a.m.

President:	Mr. GALUŠKA	(Czech Republic)
later:	Mr. CHOWDHURY (Vice-President)	(Bangladesh)
later:	Mr. GALUŠKA	(Czech Republic)

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GE.97-62544 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (continued)

(c) REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARDS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME/UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND, THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND AND THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

(agenda item 3 (c)) (E/1997/32, Parts I and II, E/1997/49, E/1997/59, E/1997/65 and Add.1 to 4, E/1997/72, E/1997/89, DP/1997/6, DP/1997/12, E/1997/L.20)

The PRESIDENT proposed that the Council, before embarking on its informal dialogue with country teams, should take note of the documents submitted under agenda item 3 (c): Report of the Secretary-General on operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation: follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly (E/1997/65 and Add.1-4), the Note by the Secretary-General on policy issues arising from the reports of the Executive Boards of United Nations funds and programmes (E/1997/89), reports of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund on its first and second regular sessions of 1997 (DP/1997/6 and DP/1997/12), the annual report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund to the Economic and Social Council (E/1997/72), the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on its first and second regular sessions of 1997 (E/1997/32, Parts I and II), extract from the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on its 1997 annual session (E/1997/L.20), and the annual report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund to the Economic and Social Council (E/1997/59).

If there were no objections, he would take it that the Council wished to note the aforementioned documents.

It was so decided .

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to consider document E/1997/49, entitled "Report of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme on the revision of the General Regulations of the World Food Programme", particularly the annex thereto which contained the proposed new General Regulations. That document had already been endorsed by the FAO Council.

If there were no objections, he would take it that the Council noted the report and approved the revised version of the General Regulations contained in the annex thereto.

Mr. MEYER (Luxembourg) asked for delegations to be given more time to study the report.

The PRESIDENT said that the Council would return to the matter at a later stage.

The meeting was suspended at 10.15 a.m. and resumed at 10.20 a.m.

DIALOGUE WITH COUNTRY TEAMS: CAMBODIA

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to embark upon a dialogue with the representatives of field offices of the United Nations system in Cambodia.

Mr. MATTHEWS (United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Cambodia) said that Cambodia had to take up a threefold challenge: to move from conflict to peace and security, from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, and from a situation of poverty for half its people to prosperity for all. Since the elections organized in 1993 by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), external aid had flowed into the country at the rate of US$ 500 million per year, in order to contribute to the resettlement and rehabilitation of 370,000 refugees and displaced persons and to the initial efforts for the reconstruction of infrastructure and other capital stock. As the emphasis shifted towards the development of long-term capacity, it was becoming increasingly necessary to invest in raising the quality of human resources. The population was suffering on many counts: undernutrition and poor education of children, a high proportion of female heads of family and people who had lost a limb or an eye because of landmines (it was estimated that 4-6 million landmines were still in place), inadequate access to health services, safe drinking water and sanitation. The rate of HIV infection was thought to be the highest in the region, a problem aggravated by the trafficking in women and children.

All parties supported the rule of law enshrined in the Constitution. However, much remained to be done in that respect, especially in the areas of the judiciary, the police, the civil service and the army. It was essential to raise salaries in the public sector, to reduce the armed forces and to provide demobilized soldiers with alternative ways of making a living.

The regulatory functions of government were underdeveloped, which inhibited investment, especially by long-term investors. Labour productivity was low and conditions of work in factories gave rise to concern, as did the human rights situation in general.

Cambodia was well endowed with forests and water; 85 per cent of its people lived in rural areas; many had only been resettled for four or five years. Forest cover had been halved since 1972 and the quality of the remaining forests had declined, leading to increased silting-up of the Great Lake (Tonlé Sap) and an increased incidence of flooding. Moreover, the uncontrolled felling of trees was depriving the Treasury of revenue, a matter of serious concern to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and donors.

Since the formation of the Royal Government in 1993, some degree of macroeconomic stability had been achieved: inflation had been brought under control, the national currency was stable and economic growth had averaged about 6 per cent per annum. Infrastructure was being upgraded and credit schemes had been introduced for the poorer sections of society. For the past two years there had been a slight surplus in rice production.

The agencies of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) had deliberately drawn up their programming documents to coincide with the Cambodian Government's first socio-economic development plan; in so doing they had endeavoured to ensure complementarity and mutual reinforcement of activities. They were increasingly following the programme approach. The agencies of the JCGP were in favour of national implementation, but the weak management and accounting systems and the scarcity of skills were impeding its widespread application. The heads of agency met formally once a month as the resident coordinator system. A record of the meetings was kept and there was systematic follow-up. In 1996, to mark the first International Day for Poverty Eradication, the resident coordinator system and the Ministry of Planning had co-sponsored a national seminar on poverty alleviation, followed by an exhibition and a press conference on United Nations Day.

Three theme groups had been created, each chaired by a different agency; they met about once a month. The administrative officers from the agencies also met once a month to discuss issues of common interest.

Mr. BOREL (Director for Cambodia and Regional Director for South-East Asia of the World Food Programme (WFP)) said that the transition from humanitarian aid to development was a very complex task. WFP had just finalized its programme for Cambodia, in which it reaffirmed the importance of development activities. All the development agencies had contributed to that task. WFP shared common interests with many institutions and non-governmental

organizations (NGOs). It took an active part in the three theme groups set up by the Resident Coordinator: the group on poverty and food safety, the group on AIDS and the group on democracy and human rights.

The WFP field office in Cambodia was also endeavouring to work towards the objectives laid down by the major world conferences, including the World Conference on Women, the World Summit for Social Development, the World Summit for Children and the International Conference on Nutrition.

WFP's collaboration with other partners was aimed at using food aid in an effective and rational way, but such aid alone could not solve all the problems.

Mr. LEFEVRE (Director of the UNESCO Office in Cambodia) said that UNESCO was for the first time formulating a strategy for Cambodia, with the aim of providing a better response to the national priorities laid down by the Government and of coordinating the work of UNESCO with the national five-year socio-economic plan and with the long-term programmes of the other United Nations agencies present in the country, especially in the implementation of the recommendations of the major international conferences. For two years UNESCO, in cooperation with UNDP, had been conducting an important programme for the strengthening of national capacity, under which experts from the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and UNESCO experts were setting up a statistics service, conducting the first exhaustive survey of the country's educational capacity and training over 1,000 education staff from all the accessible provinces of the country.

One of the problems encountered concerned the optimization of aid, for example, the attempt to reconcile the development of the country's human resources with the country's ability to pay its civil servants salaries that would enable them to carry out their duties, in other words, to ensure that the aid provided produced lasting results. There was in fact a great risk of losing staff who were essential for the country's future.

UNESCO involved United Nations Volunteers in its programmes. It worked in close collaboration with UNFPA in drafting social science textbooks for secondary teaching. Experience gained in that area showed how difficult it was to invoke the concepts of public service and individual responsibility when the State paid its civil servants only about 20 per cent of the income essential for survival. In 1998 UNESCO would participate with UNFPA and UNDP

in carrying out the ambitious national census project. In cooperation with UNDP and FAO, it had for three years supported the Cambodian Ministry of the Environment in a project aimed at setting up and training a team responsible for the protection of Tonlé Sap - the largest freshwater lake in Asia - and the surrounding region. In October 1997 the whole of that area was to be classified by UNESCO as a biosphere reserve under the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme.

Mr. PETERSEN (WHO Representative in Cambodia) gave some examples of collaboration by the United Nations system in the health sector in Cambodia. WHO worked in close cooperation with many partners, including most of the other specialized agencies. It was endeavouring to assist Cambodia in re-establishing its health system. As part of that effort the Ministry of Health was undertaking a programme aimed at rebuilding its capacity to plan, implement and evaluate health services and at coordinating support for the health sector from donors and NGOs. Under that programme, a national health plan and a framework for reform of the health system had been drawn up, with the support of other donors. UNICEF and WHO were cooperating in the field of essential drugs and vaccines. Under an agreement on division of work reached in 1992, UNICEF provided support for the supply, storage, distribution and use of drugs, while WHO contributed to the formulation of a national policy on drugs and the drafting of legislation and regulations for their production, import and sale. Another area of close collaboration between WHO and UNICEF was the expanded programme on immunization, including poliomyelitis eradication. The number of people vaccinated had greatly increased and it was expected that poliomyelitis would be eradicated by the year 2000. UNFPA had played a major role in formulating a national policy on birth spacing and had cooperated closely with WHO and UNICEF in formulating the previous and present country programmes.

The World Bank was playing an increasingly important role in the health field and had cooperated closely with WHO in the formulation of its programmes, especially those on tuberculosis and malaria. As Mr. Matthews had pointed out, the situation regarding HIV infection and AIDS in Cambodia was alarming. A technical working group on AIDS had been set up in 1994, prior to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

Mr. LEFEVRE (Director of the UNESCO Office in Cambodia) read out the statement prepared by Mr. Fauveau, representative of UNFPA in Cambodia. UNFPA had opened its Cambodia office in 1994 and had opted to share premises with UNDP, which had proved extremely practical. After spending two years on implementing preliminary projects, UNFPA, in cooperation with the other agencies in the JCGP had drawn up the first population programme for Cambodia (1997-2000), which was synchronized with the programmes of UNDP, UNICEF and WFP, together with the first five-year socio-economic development plan of the Cambodian Government. UNFPA had given unstinting support to the efforts of successive resident coordinators of the United Nations system in Cambodia to stimulate and sustain a coordinated and harmonized approach. It took an active part in joint activities: monthly meetings of heads of agencies, settlement of common administrative and security problems, preparations for major conferences and dissemination of their results. The outstanding coordination activities during the last three years included: preparations for major conferences, establishment of UNAIDS and the theme group on AIDS, joint negotiation of transitional strategies for the payment of salary supplements to officials of the Cambodian Government collaborating in projects financed by the United Nations agencies, preparations for the general population census scheduled for March 1998 and the common country assessment currently under way.

Mr. PETERSEN (WHO) read out the statement by the representative of UNICEF in Cambodia.

As the lead agency for emergency assistance, UNICEF had reopened its office in Phnom Penh as long ago as 1979. Since the arrival of the other United Nations agencies in the country in 1991, the respective roles had been more clearly defined and active collaboration between the agencies had been instituted. For example, the situation analysis of children and women in Cambodia published by UNICEF in 1995 had been prepared with extensive contributions from UNDP, FAO, WFP, WHO, UNESCO and UNFPA. The formulation of the plan of operations for 1996-2000 had also benefited from technical advice from all those agencies, which had endeavoured to avoid overlapping of activities and to ensure the complementarity of the programme.

UNICEF and UNESCO were jointly involved in primary education, UNESCO developing curricula and scientific textbooks while UNICEF contributed to programmes for the teaching of the Khmer language and mathematics. WHO focused on the eradication of poliomyelitis by organizing national

immunization days, and UNICEF continued to assist the Cambodian Government in developing the national immunization programme. That collaboration was also effective at the provincial and local levels, where UNICEF and UNDP had reached an agreement for coordinating the Community Action for Social Development Programme and the Cambodian Resettlement and Reintegration Programme (CARERE). WHO, FAO, UNDP, WFP and UNICEF had collaborated in drawing up a multisectoral national plan of action for nutrition which the Cambodian Government had adopted in early 1997, and all those agencies would play distinctive, complementary roles in implementing the plan.

The implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child occupied a prominent place in the work of UNICEF, which was assisted in its efforts by the High Commissioner for Refugees and the special representative of the Secretary-General for human rights, especially on the issues of child trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse. UNICEF also collaborated in the work carried out by ILO under its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour.

The presence of a UNAIDS adviser had improved inter-agency collaboration, exemplified in the overall national review organized in June 1997 in which not only the United Nations agencies but also some major donors had taken part.

Mr. MATTHEWS (UNDP) took the floor in his capacity as UNDP Resident Representative. He said that the Executive Board of UNDP would shortly be considering a new country cooperation framework focusing on the clearance of landmines, rural development and reform of public administration. UNDP's work in Cambodia was characterized by the dynamic efforts of the United Nations Volunteers, a large number of whom were serving there, and by the strengthening in all its programmes of monitoring and evaluation, operations that called for the collaboration of almost all the United Nations agencies. Capacity development was a central concern in all activities. Finally, in its desire to participate in the follow-up to the major international conferences of the 1990s, UNDP was making particular efforts to implement the recommendations of the Beijing Conference on Women, seizing every opportunity to promote gender equality. It was also endeavouring to follow up the Istanbul Conference on Human Settlements by active collaboration with the United Kingdom and the United States.

Mr. PEDERSEN (Observer for Denmark) asked whether the specific situation of Cambodia, which had experienced numerous extremely severe crises over a very long period, hampered the representatives of the United Nations agencies in their efforts to coordinate their activities. Had those agencies needed to apply a special method for that purpose or had they kept to the traditional techniques, designating each organization as lead agency by rotation?

When taking its decisions, the Economic and Social Council did not generally give instructions to the specialized agencies concerning the coordination of their activities. Did those agencies wish to receive such instructions, or did they prefer to retain their full scope for initiative?

He also asked whether the agencies operating in Cambodia had already provided themselves with a common framework for development aid based on a joint analysis of the situation.

Finally, he asked whether the agencies had acquired any experience with the pooling of premises and administrative services. If not, were they planning to move in that direction and what advantages did they think they would derive from such an approach?

Mr. HEARD (United Kingdom) asked what had been done to apply the programme approach to Cambodia. He also wanted to know whether the theme groups had been set up in the interests of overall economic and social development or whether they were intended to promote a synergistic effect between action carried out at the international level and action in the field.

Stating his interest in measures designed to promote gender equality, he asked whether any action of that kind had been taken in Cambodia and whether the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) played any part in that respect. He also asked for details on the payment of salary supplements to Cambodian civil servants.

The representative of UNESCO had referred to the preparations for a national population census. The development of capacity could generally benefit from that kind of operation. Was that the case in Cambodia? The WHO representative had mentioned the participation of bilateral donors in some of the activities. Had their reactions been favourable? The representative of UNFPA had spoken of the establishment of common indicators; how did that initiative fit into the programmes the Fund was implementing?

In Cambodia the United Nations agencies had had to start again almost from scratch in 1991. Perhaps some of the lessons drawn from experience acquired under such circumstances could be passed on to other country teams. What was the opinion of the Cambodia team?

From a broader viewpoint, with reference to the reforms that would affect the entire United Nations development system, were there any that the agencies operating in Cambodia already found more useful than others?

Mr. UIJTERLINDE (Netherlands) pointed out that the General Assembly had invited the Council to facilitate the follow-up of the results of major conferences in the field. Addressing his remarks primarily to the representative of WFP, he asked what were the principal constraints on the integration and coordination of activities carried out at national level.

It seemed to him that the effects of UNAIDS in the field had been merely to consolidate a control technique that was already well established. He asked for clarification in that respect.

Mr. MATTHEWS (UNDP), replying to the representative of Denmark, said that in a country like Cambodia where the needs were so numerous and urgent and where there was a great lack of decision-making and administrative structures, the agencies had no need to devise an original method of coordination: they simply had to look for concrete ways of giving their action the maximum effect. The rotation formula was not systematically applied: when he himself was absent it was not the deputy resident coordinator who replaced him but the WHO Representative. Rotation of the chairmanship of the three theme groups was more systematic.

The agencies operating in Cambodia had not provided themselves with a common framework for development aid either, taking the view that all they needed at present was a simple common platform. The members of the team believed that the practice of common country assessment would subsequently make it possible to adopt the common framework of development aid to be decided on at system level, but at the current stage in Cambodia that would be premature.

Referring to the pooling of premises and administrative services, he pointed out that only UNDP and UNFPA shared the same premises, together with a small secretariat. However, the members of the team were all convinced that

proximity would lead to better coordination, even though interaction between them was already very fruitful. Similarly, cooperation and coordination would become closer still when the team had access to the Internet.

Mr. PETERSEN (WHO) stated that the WHO office was participating to the full in the system set up in the field by UNAIDS; in particular, its staff attended all the information meetings, and that gave them a very precise picture of the situation. He believed that the pooling of certain services, as had already been done with the security services, was essential.

Mr. LEFEVRE (UNESCO) said that in Cambodia UNESCO had for the first time undertaken to develop a country strategy. That exercise was proving extremely useful because it made use of obvious synergistic effects. Because of that UNESCO was already collaborating with other institutions in a number of projects, in particular for the national population census.

Mr. MATTHEWS (UNDP), replying to the representative of the United Kingdom, said that UNDP had been practising the programme approach in Cambodia ever since the initiation of CARERE, which at the outset had been an emergency aid programme but had since become a programme devoted essentially to the development of capacity. It was also a multisectoral programme because it received support from WHO, FAO and other agencies and had also attracted a number of bilateral donors. With regard to the clearance of landmines, UNDP had managed to secure wide recognition for the principle of national implementation since the programme came almost entirely under the Cambodian authorities, and it had also secured technical and above all financial support from about a dozen countries. The same applied to the reform of public administration to which UNDP would henceforth be able to devote the resources that a high-quality programme required. Likewise, with the creation of the theme groups, what UNDP was seeking was not so much synergism between international action and the action in the field but rather a close adaptation to national needs. For the time being the team did not wish to go beyond that joint approach designed to meet the specific needs of a specific country.

Efforts to promote gender equality were being made in the majority of the major programmes implemented in Cambodia. As part of the rural development activities undertaken at local level, groups which in principle

had a 40 per cent female membership had been set up. Moreover, a programme providing small loans at the local level was producing excellent results, with an 80 per cent female clientele.

He was aware that the JCGP was opposed in principle to the payment of salary supplements to Cambodian civil servants, as the practice gave rise to dependence and inequalities. In Cambodia, however, UNDP had no choice: civil service salaries were so low that supplements were essential if the civil servants were to be available fulltime and sufficiently motivated to assimilate properly the training they were given. In 1996 UNDP had therefore taken the initiative of establishing a salary scale for all United Nations agencies present in Cambodia. The practice should be harmonized by 1 January 1998. Certain other donors, both bilateral and multilateral, were faced by the same problem and seemed prepared to adopt the same scale.

The development of common indicators was being considered on the initiative of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, which considered such indicators to be useful for the development of capacity.

A number of delegations had referred to the broader framework of reform of the entire United Nations system for development. His own philosophy was a simple one: anything that the system could do to meet the country's development needs was valid.

In reply to the representative of the Netherlands, who had asked how the Resident Coordinator followed up the major conferences, he pointed out that the government bodies in Cambodia were so weak that it was still difficult for them to convert the results of the major conferences into national programmes. In its contacts with the public authorities, the team's efforts were devoted mainly to learning about the situation on the ground in as much detail as possible. That was what enabled it to decide correctly on what operations to organize, for example campaigns against poverty.

Mr. PETERSEN (WHO), replying to the representative of the United Kingdom, said that coordination among donors was the responsibility of the national authorities. The role of the United Nations system was to assist the Government to acquire the necessary facilities to carry out such coordination. It was not altogether accurate to say that the agencies were

starting from scratch in Cambodia: there was an institutional memory in the country, which WHO took into account in its efforts for the restoration of health systems and equipment.

Implementation of UNAIDS had led to no radical changes in the inter-agency collaboration procedures that had existed previously. After a somewhat slow start to the programme, all activities were currently integrated within it. The principal effects of the programme had been an injection of funds, the appointment of a UNAIDS country officer and the official establishment of a theme group on the issue.

Mr. BOREL (WFP) stressed that the current action of WFP in Cambodia formed part of a continuous process: WFP had already been present during the conflict and had worked in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO). The problems it was currently facing related mainly to the lack of roads and irrigation systems.

The issue of salary supplements paid to national personnel was an important problem for WFP, which employed 600 local staff. With the aid of the Resident Coordinator, steps had been taken to bring about a gradual reduction in the amount of the supplements.

The specific role of WFP in following up the International Conference on Nutrition was the mapping of poverty in Cambodia, in collaboration with the various field organizations and with the aid of the UNCTAD information system, on the basis of various data (types of crops, income levels, condition of infrastructure, etc.) collected at commune level. Other organizations, including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), had displayed an interest in that project, which was to be implemented in the north-western region of the country under a collaboration agreement recently signed with CARE International.

Mr. LEFEVRE (UNESCO) pointed out that when the reform of United Nations operational activities in the Cambodian context was discussed, three aspects needed to be taken into consideration: the country was still suffering severely from the effects of the war, Cambodia's own capacity in terms of human resources was completely mobilized, and its administration did not have sufficient funds for the continued employment of the staff currently being trained by the cooperation agencies. In any case, there was clearly a

wide gap between the levels of efficacy required by the project staff and the local mentalities. With regard to financial resources, considerable efforts had already been made by IMF and the World Bank to mobilize new resources and allocate them to activities directed towards a culture of peace. In more general terms, the implementation of reforms would call for more thorough consideration by the organizations of the training of the staff who would be responsible for putting the recommendations into effect in the light of local realities.

Mr. CLERISME (Observer for Haiti) asked the representative of WFP to describe how the "food for work" programme was applied in Cambodia. How was that programme received by the local population and what results did it produce in the context of the development efforts?

Mr. BAHAMONDES (Canada) asked how UNDP had set about integrating the development of capacity into the framework of cooperation with Cambodia. Did food aid programmes such as the "food for work" programme have repercussions on the market, for example by leading to a distortion of food prices, and if so what was being done to overcome that? Were the bilateral donors involved in the formulation of the framework of cooperation with Cambodia?

Mr. CHATAIGNER (France) noted that the success of the resident coordinator system in Cambodia was apparently accounted for by the pragmatism of the team working there. He asked whether the people in charge of the various funds and programmes received precise instructions from their respective head offices and what were the procedures for reporting on their activities. Was the common manual drafted by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) read and used by those working in the field? Did the Resident Coordinator, who was also the UNDP Resident Representative, have sufficient time and support to carry out those two tasks? Did he have to report both to the Office of United Nations System Support and Services and to the Regional Office for Asia? Did the many changes made in the policies and procedures of WFP bring that agency closer to the way in which the other funds and programmes operated? Finally, was the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) bringing additional capital into Cambodia?

Mrs. SIRVE (Finland) asked what obstacles the funds and programmes encountered in the development of capacity. To what extent were programmes in Cambodia implemented by nationals? Apart from WHO, were other organizations working in collaboration with the World Bank and IMF in specific areas? Had a deadline been set for the preparation of the country strategy note?

Mr. ALOM (Bangladesh) said he would like to know on what authority political questions had been raised at the monthly meetings of the resident coordinator system. He felt that represented interference in an area that was outside the competence of the United Nations agencies responsible for development cooperation in Cambodia under the auspices of UNDP. Moreover, he suggested it would be useful to bring the reports on those meetings to the notice of the national authorities so that they could benefit from them.

Mr. MATTHEWS (UNDP), in reply to the representative of Canada, said that the development of capacity in Cambodia was principally concerned with two sectors: the upgrading of human resources in order to provide the country with the skills lost as a result of genocide, and the establishment of an appropriate institutional framework, namely the reform of the administration, an essential step for setting up new decision-making structures. A major problem in that context was the loss of civil servants who, once trained, were attracted by other jobs on account of the extremely low salaries paid in the civil service. Collaboration with bilateral donors for the formulation of the country cooperation framework took place at the stage of the drafting of the consultative note; the bilateral and multilateral partners and the NGOs were invited to comment on the draft, which was subsequently submitted to all the funding bodies in Bangkok.

In reply to the representative of France, he stated that there was no shortage of instructions from the respective head offices but that the degree of decentralization and delegation of authority varied considerably from one organization to another, which sometimes slowed down the decision-making process. The resident coordinator system had to report on its activates to the United Nations once a year; the report prepared for that purpose was the outcome of very thorough teamwork. The common manual prepared by the CCPOQ was a useful tool for the members of the field team, who made any necessary comments on it at the monthly coordination meetings. It was still somewhat early to assess the impact of UNCDF in Cambodia, as the first projects had

been approved only recently, but it could already be stated that UNCDF would play an important role in supporting activities in rural areas, by supplementing the capital provided by bilateral donors under the CARERE programme, for example.

In reply to the representative of Finland, he stressed that the scarcity of national resources and the lack of experienced staff restricted the possibilities for national implementation. The funds and programmes insisted on national control of projects as far as possible, but it would be premature at the present stage to entrust responsibility for the financial aspects of operations to the national authorities. The resident coordinator system worked in close collaboration with the World Bank under the support programme for the monitoring and analysis of poverty; there was very fruitful collaboration with the World Bank, FAO and the NGO "Global Witness" to draw the attention of international public opinion to the problem of intensive deforestation in Cambodia. Collaboration with IMF had principally concerned the re-establishment of the central banking system and would henceforth concentrate on the formulation of fiscal policies. There were no plans to prepare a country strategy note in the near future, priority currently being given to the joint assessment, which should be completed by the end of 1997.

In response to the concerns expressed by the representative of Bangladesh, he wished to make it clear that political matters did not come within the purview of the resident coordinator system. Nevertheless, the instability of the political climate in Cambodia provided justification for inviting the representative of the Secretary-General in the country to the monthly meetings of the team of fund and programme managers so as to keep them informed of political developments inasmuch as those developments influenced work in the field. The reports of those meetings had not hitherto been brought to the notice of the national authorities, but the suggestion made by the representative of Bangladesh deserved consideration.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh) took the Chair.

Mr. PETERSEN (WHO) said he collaborated closely with the other United Nations agencies operating in the field, both because he had received express instructions from WHO to do so and because such collaboration was a

necessity under the local conditions; he gave details of that collaboration in his half-yearly reports. WHO had established guidelines concerning the participation of its representatives in the resident coordinator system.

Mr. BOREL (WFP), replying to the representative of Haiti, pointed out that WFP activities in Cambodia were in a transitional phase between emergency assistance and development. Since late 1994, however, WFP had been implementing programmes that were much more oriented towards the development and reconstruction of the country, in particular helping to restore communications and irrigation facilities, which were the greatest needs of the villages. It worked with the village development committees and with the Government, in particular with the Ministry for Rural Development. He stressed that no project could be carried out without coordination. The WFP country programme to be submitted to the Council in January 1998 had been drawn up with the participation of other funds and programmes and with the Government. He pointed out to the representative of Canada that the food aid could not result in any distortion of markets in Cambodia, since WFP did not import rice but purchased it locally with the donations it received.

Mr. RUNGE (Germany) asked the UNDP Resident Representative to what extent it was possible, in view of the prevailing situation in Cambodia, to implement programmes for the development of capacity, particularly in the provinces. He also suggested it might be more sensible for educational programmes to be implemented by UNESCO rather than by UNICEF.

Mr. Gašluska (Czech Republic) resumed the Chair.

Mrs. WAHAB (Observer for Indonesia), noting with satisfaction that there appeared to be no problem with inter-agency coordination in Cambodia, questioned whether it was really necessary to establish a new coordination mechanism in the field. Noting also that ASEAN was taking an active part in the recovery programme for Cambodia, she expressed the view that it would be most beneficial for the United Nations system to cooperate with regional organizations.

Mr. MABILANGAN (Philippines) asked what measures had been taken or were planned in order to follow up the major international conferences. He also asked whether anything was being done to remedy the problem, mentioned by the Resident Coordinator, of the disparity between the instructions given by the various head offices to their field staff. Had any conflicts arisen

between the head offices on organizational matters? Finally, he would be interested to know what was the role of the regional offices in directing the activities of the national offices.

Mr. DLAMINI (Observer for Swaziland), emphasizing the futility of any undertaking that did not have God's backing, stressed the need for the field teams not to work in isolation but to coordinate their work with that of the religious authorities. He was impressed by the way in which UNESCO, always attentive to needs and aware of the problems, carried out its activities in Cambodia, and expressed the hope that more resources would be put at its disposal. He expressed surprise that there were so few women in the field teams, as he felt that their special sensitivity could be a valuable asset. Finally he warned against any bias concerning the policy followed by governments. Field teams were there to light the way for governments, not to contest their policies.

Mr. MARCH (Australia) said that the dialogue with the field teams was extremely fruitful for the Council. He asked whether the representatives of the system, in view of their operational experience, felt it was better to concentrate activities on a few priority areas or to commit resources in all areas and wait for donors to take over the funding.

Mr. BRAHIM (Malaysia) said that the smooth operation of integration and coordination in Cambodia was due in part to the individuals serving there. However, such an important matter could not be left to chance: coordination should be the outcome of deliberate action and it should be institutionalized. He felt it would be desirable, whenever a meeting of resident coordinators took place, to invite a representative of the host country to attend. Moreover, he asked what the representatives of the United Nations agencies thought of the idea, which might be put forward by the Secretary-General as part of the second stage of reforms, of setting up a United Nations group for development in the field.

Mr. HEIN (Observer for FAO) said that the FAO representative in Cambodia, who had unfortunately been unable to travel to Geneva, had prepared a brief statement giving a number of examples of inter-agency cooperation, particularly in respect of infrastructure, development, irrigation works and forestry. Copies of that statement would be made available to delegations. One of the strong points of the United Nations funds and programmes was their

ability to mobilize their partners within the system, even the smallest ones. As far as the follow-up of the International Conference on Nutrition was concerned, that would be done by means of the existing mechanisms, such as theme groups, and would be a collaborative exercise.

Mr. MATTHEWS (Resident Coordinator), replying to the question raised by the representative of France concerning the support received by the Resident Coordinator and the time at his disposal, said he spent almost half his time on his duties as Resident Coordinator. As he was also responsible for security, he had little time left to fulfil his role as UNDP Resident Representative, but he had the good fortune of having an excellent deputy. He welcomed the support recently given to the resident coordinator system in the form of a small budget, which he hoped it would be possible to increase.

As to the extent to which it was currently possible to develop capacity in Cambodia, he stated that activities in that respect were easier in the provinces than in the capital, where politics tended to present an obstacle to any initiatives. He also said that UNDP was cooperating with ASEAN and had just decided to allocate resources to supplement those that the countries of the Association had mobilized in support of Cambodia's membership.

He informed the representative of the Philippines that any disparities between the head offices related not to the instructions they gave to their field representatives but to the degree of latitude they allowed them. With regard to the follow-up of international conferences, he had already referred to the very specific programmes set up to assist governments in the better targeting of their activities to control poverty, in accordance with the decisions taken at the Copenhagen Conference, and also the measures taken as a result of the Beijing Conference. On the other hand, it was very difficult to find partners within the Cambodian Government to collaborate in the follow-up of the Rio de Janeiro summit meeting.

In reply to the questions put by the representative of Swaziland, he said the representatives of the United Nations in Cambodia worked in close cooperation with denominational NGOs in many fields. He accepted that government policy was not open to criticism in itself: the problem was that it was difficult to implement that policy if the Government did not take the necessary decisions.

With regard to the remarks made by the representative of Australia, concerning the choice between action limited to certain priority areas and more broadly-based action, he explained that UNDP had substantially reduced the scope of its programme and was henceforth concentrating on four major areas of activity. It committed sufficient resources to get the process under way pending the arrival of contributions from other donors. That approach had so far proved fruitful. Finally, he explained to the representative of Malaysia that collaboration was not left to chance but was increasingly being organized. With regard to the proposals that were to be made in the second stage of the reforms, any reform that led to more effective work in the field would be favourably received.

Mr. PETERSEN (WHO) said he did not think there was any need to set up a new coordination mechanism in Cambodia, since the existing arrangements had proved their efficacy. With regard to ASEAN, he stated that the WHO regional offices in Manila and New Delhi had recently signed a memorandum of agreement with that Association. There were a large number of women in WHO, and at one time they had accounted for half the staff. Nevertheless, he believed that geographical representation was equally important.

Mr. BOREL (WFP) said that WFP employed many women in the field, who were not afraid of working in the front line. Their numbers depended more or less on chance. With regard to the reduction in the scope of activities, he said that the programme his organization was to submit for Cambodia in January 1998 would concentrate on three major areas: public works and village development, improvement of human resources and immediate food aid.

Mr. LEFEVRE (UNESCO), referring to the respective roles of UNESCO and UNICEF in education in Cambodia, said that the problems were so enormous that it was necessary to share the tasks. UNICEF, which had been present in the country for a longer period, had acquired a strong position in education, and in its capacity as a fund it was often able to respond more easily to the needs. At the same time, UNESCO had many projects in prospect and was collaborating very closely with UNICEF in literacy campaigns.

Referring to the comments made by the representative of Swaziland, he stressed the importance of religion in Cambodia in all aspects of life. Keeping in touch with the needs and understanding how they could be met was the approach followed by UNESCO in its efforts to be effective, and that was

an approach shared by others. With regard to the question of integration and cooperation raised by the representative of Malaysia, he said the most important factor in good cooperation was people. It was therefore of cardinal importance to improve the recruitment and training of the staff of the funds and programmes.

The PRESIDENT warmly thanked the entire team of United Nations representatives in Cambodia for attending the meeting and for the most interesting presentations they had given of their work.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.